

3.10 RECREATION

This section describes existing recreational use on the project site and in the surrounding vicinity, evaluates potential impacts of the proposed action and the lesser-capacity alternative, and discusses any mitigation measures necessary to avoid or reduce potential significant impacts. Information contained in the Final EIS for the Sand Point Reuse Project (City of Seattle, 1996), unpublished data maintained by Sand Point Magnuson Park staff and multiple site visits were the primary sources of information used to compile this section.

3.10.1 Affected Environment

3.10.1.1 Sand Point Magnuson Park

The project site includes somewhat less than half of the area of Sand Point Magnuson Park, which is a 352-acre regional park in the City of Seattle park system. The park is a multi-purpose property that provides a diverse array of opportunities for recreation and leisure activities, scheduled and informal sports, nature-oriented activities, and arts, cultural and education functions. Many of the activities use recreational facilities originally developed by the Navy, while others occur on unprogrammed, open park lands. Key existing facilities and activity areas within the overall park property include:

- a community campus area with an historic district of more than 20 former naval station structures, generally along the western edge of the park property and housing most of the arts, cultural, civic and education events and activities;
- two existing sports field areas, one in the western part of the park adjacent to part of the historic district (known as the Sand Point Fields, or just the Sports Fields), the other a Sports Meadow area (known as the Magnuson Park Fields or the Sports Meadow) in the central portion of the park;
- a children's play area and a community garden, located generally east of the historic district and between the two sports field areas;
- an off-leash exercise area for dogs located west of the Sports Meadow, with a narrow extension to the Lake Washington shoreline;
- six unlighted outdoor tennis courts, located just east of the Sports Meadow;
- a shoreline area along Lake Washington that includes a swimming beach with a permanent float, a wading pool, and two picnic shelters (both available for reservation) plus scattered individual tables (some available for reservation);
- a low, open, grassy hill, known as Sand Point Head or Kite Hill, located between the tennis courts and the beach area;
- a motorized boat launch facility on Lake Washington, in the southeastern corner of the park, with four paved launch lanes and three piers;
- a forested hill and shoreline area known as Promontory Point, located to the southwest of the boat launch;
- two additional picnic shelters (located north of the Sand Point sports fields and available for reservation) and isolated picnic tables; and
- park roadways, parking lots and pathways to support vehicular and pedestrian circulation and parking needs.

The 153-acre project site incorporates portions of many of the facilities identified above. These include a small portion of the community campus and historic district; the two sports field areas; the tennis courts; the parking lot and access road serving Kite Hill and the beach; a segment of the shoreline between the swimming beach and the boat launch; two of the four picnic shelters; and a significant portion of the park's vehicle and pedestrian circulation network, including approximately 1.4 miles of trails and pathways. The Sand Point Fields area has two baseball/softball fields overlapped by two soccer fields and off-season practice field area. The Sports Meadow has two additional baseball/softball field layouts but generally supports multiple field uses, including soccer and ultimate Frisbee as well as informal uses. Most of the acreage within the project site is unprogrammed space, including open vegetated areas and several non-historic buildings that housed the former Navy Commissary and associated activities.

Recreational use of the existing Sand Point Magnuson Park facilities includes both scheduled and unscheduled activities. Park staff coordinate use of the existing sports fields with little league baseball, softball, youth soccer and other organizations based in the local community. Programmed field use for practices, league games and tournaments occurs on nearly a year-round basis.

Comprehensive statistical records of all recreational activity at Sand Point Magnuson Park are not maintained, and the data that are available do not provide the ability to estimate total park use on a daily, monthly or annual basis. To provide a partial picture of the park uses that can be quantified to some extent, **Tables 3.10-1** through **3.10-4** include recent data for four activity components at the park.

The public may reserve four picnic shelters and five individual picnic tables at Sand Point Magnuson Park on a first-come, first-served basis. **Table 3.10-1** shows picnic shelter and table reservations by year for four recent years. The entries reflect the number of days per year on which the given facility was reserved, but not the number of people using the facilities. Shelter 1 accommodates 100 people, Shelters 2, 3 and 4 accommodate up to 50 people each and individual picnic tables can accommodate 8 to 10 people each. The typical party size for groups reserving picnic facilities is not reported in the data.

Table 3.10-1
Picnic Shelter/Table Reservations by Year
1997-2001

<u>Picnic Shelter/Table</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2001</u>
Shelter #1 Boat Ramp location	216	208	202	208
Shelter #2 Near Kite Hill	204	176	182	198
Shelter #3 Junior League Playground			170	228
Shelter #4 Sand Point Fields			92	166
Table 1 – Lake Washington Shoreline	72	60	46	56
Table 2 – Lake Washington Shoreline	68	70	44	38
Table 3 – Lake Washington Shoreline	30	18	18	22
Table 4 – Lake Washington Shoreline	28	16	14	10
Table 5 – Lake Washington Shoreline	30	20	18	10

Note: No data available for year 2000 due to software problems at reservation office.

There are lifeguards on duty at Magnuson Beach for several hours per day during a 10-week period of the summer. Lifeguards take head counts 4 times per day in order to estimate daily beach attendance. **Table 3.10-2** provides the annual totals of the daily beach attendance reports for 1992 through 2001. The figures ranged from a low of 11,753 in 1995 to a high of 19,168 in 1996, and averaged just over 15,000 per year for this 10-year period. Beach use is highly dependent upon weather patterns and subsequent water temperatures. The reported beach attendance figures under-count total actual use, because some portion of all beach use occurs outside of the 10-week managed season or outside the in-season hours when lifeguards are present.

Table 3.10-2
Magnuson Beach Attendance by Year
1992-2001

<u>Year</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
1992	17,590	1997	15,050
1993	12,604	1998	16,655
1994	18,438	1999	12,600
1995	11,753	2000	15,245
1996	19,168	2001	11,873
10-Year Avg. = 15,098			

The Magnuson Boat Ramp is available for use by permit from the Department of Parks and Recreation. Annual use of the boat launch fluctuates considerably; the busiest years have been those when a sockeye salmon fishing season is opened. The numbers in **Table 3.10-3** are estimates of the number of boats (not people) using the launch, based on payment receipts for launch permits. If an average of 2.5 people per boat is assumed, the boat launch figures would correspond to a range of about 16,000 to 46,000 annual users in recent years. Actual use is somewhat higher than what is reported in the table, as there is always some non-paid parking/launching use occurring.

Table 3.10-3
Number of Paid/Authorized Boat Launch Uses
by Vehicles with Trailers, 1996-2001

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Users</u>
1996	18,550 (sockeye season)
1999	8,678
2000	12,191
2001	6,294

In addition to typical active and passive recreational uses of the park, many major recreational and community events are held at various sites at Sand Point Magnuson Park. **Table 3.10-4** summarizes the numbers of special events that have occurred at Sand Point Magnuson Park within the past few years, and corresponding estimates of participants. Total events ranged from 18 to 78 per year over the period, with the number of events in the past 2 years (2000 and 2001) at a much higher level than in the initial 3 years. Recreational functions accounted for the largest share of the special events (70 out of 220 total), while there were also sizable numbers of arts, benefit and “other” events. Estimates of annual attendance at the special events ranged as high as about 85,000 for the 76 events in 2001.

Table 3.10-4
Special Events Summary, 1997-2001

Year	Total Events	Event Type					Estimated Visitors	
		Recreation	Exhibition	Arts	Benefit	Other	Low	High
1997	18	8		4	3	3	31280	36700
1998	23	3	3	3	8	6	28345	34945
1999	25	11	2	4	5	3	26190	37170
2000	78	28	4	21	12	13	50790	65455
2001	76	20	7	17	11	21	59106	85367
Totals	220	70	16	49	39	46	195711	259637
Five Year Average	44	14	3	10	8	9	39142	51927

Notes:

Event Days are the number of calendar days per year when events were held. Multiple events could be held each day.

Total Events are the total number of distinct events held per year.

Event Types: Recreation includes summer camps, skateboard exhibitions, kite festivals, fun runs; Exhibition includes art installations such as Horsehead, art shows such as Best of the Northwest, and specialty exhibitions such as Western Fruit Society.

Performing Arts includes theatre productions, cabaret performances such as Circus Contraption and open-air band concerts.

Benefit includes sales and auctions that support non-profit organizations both on-campus and city-wide.

Other includes large volunteer events such as Eddie Bauer United Way Day of Caring, large private events - weddings, company dinners, reunions.

Source: Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, Sand Point Magnuson Park Division, unpublished data, 2002.

3.10.1.2 Project Vicinity

Multiple recreational facilities are found next to the project site and within the surrounding local area. The Burke-Gilman Trail is located to the west of the project site. This regional pedestrian/bicycle corridor stretches approximately 20 miles from the Fremont Neighborhood of Seattle north to Bothell. The Burke-Gilman Trail connects with the Sammamish River Trail in Bothell, adding approximately 10 more miles to the trail that then ends in Redmond. Other nearby recreational facilities include the Sand Point Country Club golf course, a private facility of approximately 110 acres; the View Ridge Swim and Tennis Club, a private membership facility at NE 77th Street and Sand Point Way NE; and the City's Matthews Beach Park, located north of Sand Point Magnuson Park, and east of Sand Point Way NE. Inverness Ravine and View Ridge are also City parks located within the neighborhood land use study area.

3.10.2 Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

3.10.2.1 Construction Period

Construction activity for the proposed project would disrupt and, in some cases, displace existing recreational uses at Sand Point Magnuson Park. Given the planned phasing of project construction, disruption of existing activities would be limited to certain sectors of the project site during a specific period, but would not extend across the entire site or the entire park. The proposed phasing plan also attempts to minimize disruption of existing recreational uses by scheduling completion of selected new recreational elements prior to eliminating existing recreational elements. An example of this is the completion of rebuilding and enlarging the natural-turf sports meadow prior closing the Sand Point fields for phase 2 construction. While construction effects at a specific area or facility would typically be noticed for only one or two construction seasons, disturbance from project construction would occur on an intermittent basis for a period of 10 years or more.

Specific on-site cases of disruption or displacement of existing recreational uses during project construction are summarized as follows:

- Use of the existing Sports Meadow (Magnuson Park) fields would be displaced during Phase 1 (expected to occur during 2003) while this area was being reconstructed, and could continue for another year as the new natural-turf fields became established.
- Use of the existing baseball and soccer fields along Sportsfield Drive (the Sand Point fields) would be displaced beginning with Phase 2 (expected to begin in 2004). Four of the new synthetic-surfaced fields would be constructed during Phase 2, but these fields would probably not be completed for approximately 3 years after work began in this area.
- The existing outdoor tennis courts and Sports Meadow parking lot would be removed during Phase 3. Users of these tennis courts would presumably be able to shift their activity to the tennis center planned for a site immediately north of Building 47. If the proposed tennis center were not ready in time, however, these users would be displaced to other parks or private facilities.
- Construction of the expanded Kite Hill/Beach Drive parking lot during Phase 3 would cause some construction disturbance for users of the beach area and would likely disrupt traffic on Beach Drive at times.

- Reconfiguration of NE 65th Street, Sportsfield Drive and Beach Drive would occur during Phases 2 and 3. These construction activities would cause intermittent traffic disruptions for all park users heading to the shoreline area of the park, including the beach and boat launch facilities.
- Clearing and grading activities would occur throughout extensive portions of the proposed wetland/habitat complex at times during Phases 2 and 3, which could span a period of up to about 7 years. Many of the users of the existing habitat zones of the park would likely be displaced as a result, at least during periods of active construction work.

3.10.2.2 Operation Period

As described in detail in **Section 2.2**, the proposal involves development of a sports field complex, a wetland/habitat complex, an integrated drainage system, and a circulation system on the project site. This would entail construction of eleven (11) sports fields with synthetic, all-weather surfaces and lighting systems; a sports meadow accommodating up to 4 fields that would have a natural-grass surface and would not be lit; a wetland and habitat area of approximately 65 acres with a connection to Lake Washington between the existing swim beach and the boat launch; a total of approximately 990 parking spaces; three building complexes to house restrooms, concession stands and maintenance facilities for the playfield, sports meadow and habitat areas; paved surfaces for an inline-skate hockey area and three basketball courts; three sand volleyball courts; and open lawn flex space for multiple uses; a 1.5-mile cross-country running trails; and a pedestrian trail system through the sports fields and around the wetland habitat.

Completion of the proposed action would represent a significant expansion in the capacity of Sand Point Magnuson Park to accommodate both scheduled and informal recreational sports activities. In 2000 the sports fields at Sand Point Magnuson Park were scheduled for use a total of 3,712 hours. **Table 3.10-5** indicates the anticipated maximum estimated increased hours of use for each major sport activity that would be possible at Sand Point Magnuson Park with the new sports fields. The Department of Parks and Recreation does not have specific future projections of field use hours or participant occasions with the proposed sports fields completed and in operation. The figures in **Table 3.10-5** indicate that the proposed fields would provide the capacity to support over 20,000 hours of field use, however, suggesting that future sports field use could be several times larger than the current numbers.

Table 3.10-5
Capacity Analysis for Sand Point Magnuson Park

Maximum Estimated Hours of Increase by Sport	
Softball	6,200
Baseball/Softball	2,500
Baseball	2,500
Soccer	8,700
Ultimate Frisbee	600
Track and Field	600

Source: Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation 2000.

Several reviewers of the Draft EIS expressed concern that the new and redeveloped sports fields in Sand Point Magnuson Park would be dedicated primarily or exclusively to formal, scheduled league sports

activities, thereby depriving users who are not affiliated with organized leagues of the opportunity for informal, drop-in use of sports fields. While the proposed sports fields would be used primarily for scheduled team-sports activities (games, practices and tournaments), there would still be frequent and considerable blocks of unscheduled field time that would allow ample opportunity for informal use of the fields. The 2002 update of the JAFDP acknowledges the need for community access to unprogrammed park space (Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, 2002). It notes that most playfields are available for unstructured play until 3 PM on weekdays and that evening and weekend times may also be available, depending upon the season and the type of facility.

Based on the current athletics schedule for April through June 2002, the existing Magnuson and Sand Point fields are heavily scheduled for team sports beginning at 3 PM on weekdays, 8 AM on Saturdays, and as early as 9 AM on Sundays (Sand Point Magnuson Park Division, 2002). The programmed activities typically end around 6 PM on Saturdays and at 4, 4:30 or 5 PM on Sundays. With the proposed action, the redeveloped sports meadow fields would likely follow a similar programming schedule, with opportunities for unstructured play limited primarily to weekdays before 3 PM and early morning and late afternoon/early evening times on weekends. The new, lighted fields would probably follow a similar scheduling pattern, with the addition of extended evening play under the lights. These fields would not all be scheduled for evening use on every night of the week, but the lights at these fields would be left off when not scheduled for use. Therefore, informal, drop-in use of the lighted sports fields would not be possible during non-daylight hours. Because the overall City scheduling approach for park fields would not change, however, the net opportunity for unstructured play would actually increase by virtue of the greater number of fields.

Formal use of the proposed wetland/habitat complex, such as through organized group visits and environmental education programs, and unstructured visits to the habitat complex represent another component of increased future park use. Because the proposed wetland/habitat complex would be significantly different from existing resources on the site or at other sites in the city, a specific projection of future use of this project component has also not been developed. It can be noted, however, that the types of passive recreational activities (e.g., bird watching and other passive-appreciative interests) that presently occur in the undeveloped portions of the park would still be available in the future, and would be promoted and enhanced through the proposed action. Visitor amenities (such as trails, benches, restrooms and interpretive/educational facilities) included in the project would facilitate passive uses in the wetland/habitat complex and increase the quality of the experience for most users. The development of educational programs for K-12 and higher education classes is considered an integral part of the function of the wetland/habitat complex and would further increase use of this park amenity.

The increased usage of the Sand Point Magnuson Park facilities would occur over a relatively long time rather than all at once. It is possible that use of the park could actually decrease during certain portions of the buildout period, when construction activities would limit use of certain areas of the park. The proposed redevelopment of this public facility would be compatible with the existing uses on site and would be consistent with the City of Seattle's comprehensive plan and the *Seattle Parks and Recreation Plan 2000* (see discussion in **Section 3.7.2 Land Use Plans, Policies and Regulations**).

Redevelopment of the project site would intensify activity in some of the existing recreational use areas on the site. The increased number and variety of proposed recreational uses planned for Sand Point Magnuson Park would attract an increased number of people to the park with an interest in the activities

that would be supported. Additional lighted ball fields would attract substantially more people to the park for baseball/softball games over extended operating hours for such activities. The addition of more multi-use fields could attract an increased number of groups to the park or lead to an increased number of tournaments of similar events (see **Table 3.10-4**) being scheduled at the park, though it should be noted that limited spectator amenities (limited bleachers, no scoreboards, no public address systems) have been incorporated in the project design to minimize spectator-related impacts. Environmental education uses would represent a substantial increase in visitor numbers in the wetland/habitat area of the park. The increased number and length of trails available for pedestrian and bicycle use could attract an increased number of pedestrians from the adjacent neighborhoods, as well as cyclists from surrounding communities who might use the Burke Gilman Trail and its proposed connections to the park. The proposed re-design of the surface drainage system and wetland area would attract an increased number of individuals and groups to enjoy and/or study the wildlife habitat area, consistent with park system goals to establish wetland/habitat features in urban locations.

Redevelopment of the park would also modify certain use patterns in some areas on the project site. For example, human access and use in some portions of the wetland/habitat area would be limited to reduce the potential for impacts to plant and animal life, whereas the entire area is currently open to the public. However, new trails created under the proposed action would provide limited but more directed access to the wetland/habitat area for the enjoyment of the public. In addition, on-site parking patterns would be modified as some existing areas used for parking would be relocated under the proposed action.

Redevelopment of Sand Point Magnuson Park could also lead to an increase in the number of recreational users present off-site in the vicinity of the park. For example, there could be more bicyclists, walkers and joggers using local streets adjacent to the park as routes to access park facilities.

3.10.3 Impacts of the Alternatives

3.10.3.1 Lesser-Capacity Alternative

In general, potential recreational impacts for this alternative would be similar in nature and character to those described for the proposed action. Redevelopment of the project site under this alternative would still provide for extended use of the park at night, although scheduled night use would occur on 3 fields, rather than 11 fields in the case of the proposed action. The lesser-capacity alternative would still represent a substantial increase in the capacity of Sand Point Magnuson Park to support programmed recreational sports and environmental education activities. However, the lesser-capacity alternative would increase sports field capacity by only about half as much as the proposed action.

3.10.3.2 No Action Alternative

Because no new construction would occur as a result of the no action alternative, potential impacts associated with redevelopment of the project site would not occur. Under this alternative, the project site would continue to exist in its current state and would continue to be used by individuals and groups for active and passive recreational activities, on both a scheduled and an informal basis. The level of park use would likely increase over time at approximately the same rate of growth in the local and regional population using the park.

3.10.4 Cumulative Impacts

Re-development of the project site under either the proposed action or the lesser-capacity alternative would not impact use of other recreational facilities or contribute to a larger pattern of redevelopment associated with recreational uses in the vicinity of the project site. Rather, it would respond to a need for additional open space and recreational facilities/acreage that was identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan (1994) and the Seattle Parks and Recreation Plan 2000. The Sand Point Reuse Plan adopted by the City in 1997 involves redevelopment of other areas on the Sand Point property that could contribute to an increase in usage of the overall site beyond that identified in this EIS, along with increased construction activity and impacts associated with this redevelopment, and increased traffic on- and off-site. However, none of these activities or project alternatives is anticipated to result in significant cumulative recreational use impacts in the vicinity of the project site.

3.10.5 Mitigation Measures

Because no significant adverse recreation impacts have been identified, no mitigation measures are required. The Parks Department has proposed the following measure to reduce conflicts between scheduled events at the proposed facility.

- Scheduling of recreational/athletic activities at the sports field complex and special events in the community campus sector of Sand Point Magnuson Park would be coordinated to minimize "overscheduling" more visitors than park facilities can comfortably accommodate.

3.10.6 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

No significant unavoidable adverse impacts to recreation from the proposed action are anticipated. The proposal would result in a significant, unavoidable increase in opportunities for programmed and informal recreational activities and a significant increase in the use of Sand Point Magnuson Park, but those changes are considered to be positive and consistent with the objectives identified for the project.